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The Playground

To Promote Normal Wholesome Play and Public Recreation

PLAY IN INSTITUTIONS



L. W. Hine

NO CHILD NEEDS PLAY MORE THAN
THE CHILD IN AN INSTITUTION

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The Playground

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L. W. Hine

DO BOYS IN AN ORPHAN ASYLUM NEED PLAY?

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON PLAY IN INSTITUTIONS *



ALEXANDER JOHNSON.

Certain factors of institution life make directive effort at play for the inmates even more necessary than it is among normal people in the outside world. The first of these factors we shall mention is the narrow environment. The narrower the environment of any class of people, the more necessary to a normal life is physical and intellectual stimulus, and an institution's environment, unless special efforts are made to broaden it, is usually a very narrow one. The second factor is that the inmates of institutions, either those for juveniles or those for adults, are not normal.

Even the child who is simply dependent, is not quite normal, and of course the defectives, blind, deaf, feeble-minded, crippled or insane are still less so. Because they are not normal they need to have done for them certain things which normal people may do for themselves. The third and most important of the factors to be mentioned is the tendency to monotony, the endless repetition of identical activities which is almost unconquerable. Routine is much easier than variety. The path we have trodden every day is so much smoother than a new one. We see the effects in every part of institutional life, from the time the first bell rings in the morning until lights are out at night. This monotony is the

* Report given at Fourth Annual Congress of Playground Association of America, June 8, 1910.

Committee.—Alexander Johnson, Fort Wayne, Ind., Chairman; Sadie American, New York City; Rev. Brother Barnabas, Lincolndale, N. Y.; O. H. Burritt, Overbrook, Pa.; Amos W. Butler, Indianapolis, Ind.; Charles F. F. Campbell, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Theodore F. Chapin, Westboro, Mass.; Homer Folks, New York City; C. M. Goethe, Sacramento, Cal.; Mrs. Harriet H. Heller, Omaha, Neb.; E. R. Johnstone, Vineland, N. J.; Rev. P. R. McDevitt, Philadelphia, Pa.; Adolf Meyer, M.D., Baltimore, Md.; Elizabeth Morse, Philadelphia, Pa.; R. R. Reeder, Ph.D., Hastings-on-Hudson, N. Y.; James E. West, Washington, D. C.; Lightner Witmer, Ph.D., Philadelphia, Pa.

PLAY IN INSTITUTIONS

source of many institutional ills, from the dyspepsia that comes of unenjoyed food, distasteful from its sameness, to the habit of dependence that follows, upon a life pre-arranged in its every detail, by a higher authority.

Playtime is the opportunity of institutions' salvation, but play in the narrow and frequently unplastic environment itself tends to sameness. Hence, constant direction and the infusion of new spirit are needed.

DEFECTIVE CHILDREN

Many defective children who come to our institutions must be sedulously taught a great many things which normal children learn in their mother's arms, or by unconscious imitation. Some of them have not learned to walk, or even to feed themselves. Many of them have not the least faculty of play, and must be taught as carefully and scientifically as they are taught a school lesson. Many others know only crude or even vulgar games. With many the play instinct finds its only expression in teasing or annoying one another. To all these we must teach bright and happy games. This is particularly true of feeble-minded children, many of whom, if permitted, will sit in dull apathy, hardly observing the others around them. Their life is at a low level, barely higher than that of the vegetable kingdom, far below that of many animals. For them the awakening of both the body and the mind is gained by stimulating or implanting the play instinct. As they begin to play they begin to live.

PLAY IS LIFE

At any rate for children, play is life. "The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment," so play is more than exercise, or health promotion, or discipline. It is an expression of life and therefore, to be promoted because life is good.

I think we miss our way regarding play, when we think of it as a means to an end. I have seen a report on play, in which it was considered from five different points, as conducing to five different kinds of benefits with no hint that it was good in itself. This is much like an essay on art, in which art shall be considered a prevention of dissipation, a means of education, a source of income, an occupation for idle hours, and which ignores the funda-



Massachusetts Commission for the Blind

DO BLIND CHILDREN NEED PLAY?



Perkins Institution for the Blind

THE GIANT SWING

Built of 3-inch steam pipe. The necessary couplings are regular pipe-rail fittings. From the center of the uprights (which are 11 feet $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch tall) it is 14 feet 3 inches long and 6 feet wide. It is set on 6x6 hard pine timbers, 39 feet 6 inches long, the crosswise timbers 6x8 and in length 10 feet 8 inches. These are halved and put together by $\frac{7}{8}$ -inch bolts. The plank, which is 18 feet long, 1 foot wide and 3 inches thick, is hung by patent roller swing clasps. The chains are 10 feet 6 inches long from clasp to plank. Total cost of materials, \$90.

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mental truth about art, namely—that art is life, and, therefore, art is for art's sake, "Beauty is its own excuse for being."

Play is life. This is true of all play, but emphatically true of the play of children. We do not play for some other end. Play is an end, not a means. Of course properly directed and enjoyed play conduces to other desirable ends, but the other ends are not the reason of play.

The only preparation for life is living. We often talk of preparation for life as though we were to begin to live after the preparation is over, as we begin a journey, after we have bought our ticket and secured our berth in the sleeper. But the way to prepare to live to-morrow is by living to-day.

It follows that in a well-regulated institution the time devoted to play is just as worthy an object of attention as that devoted to school, or sleep, or work, or eating. If we have regular hours of sleep and work, so we must have regular hours of play. If we have cooks for the dinner table, we must have directors for the playground. If it is worth while making the food, not only nutritious, but also appetizing (as it is because unenjoyed meals induce dyspepsia), so the play must not only be healthful exercise, but a source of enjoyment. It must be real fun. We must do it because we cannot resist it.

Though we are mainly concerned to-day with institutions for children, yet the identical principles apply to institutions for adults. Their play often takes a different form, but is no less important, as every well-instructed alienist will tell you.

When we shall be in complete harmony with our environment—some thousands of years nearer the millenium—we shall all work in the same spirit in which we play, *i. e.*, our daily task will be the one thing we most desire to do. We miss it in play if that spirit does not enter into it now, without waiting for the millenium.

PLAY LEADERSHIP

There is a certain danger attending on directed play which should always be borne in mind. It is possible to direct the play so seriously and positively that it becomes a task. It is a great mistake to unduly curb the voluntary element in it, hence, the director should be, as he is in every wisely managed playground, a

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playfellow rather than a play-teacher, taking active part and preferably not the leading part in the game.

For a large institution possibly one or more specialists in play may be necessary to teach new games and to watch against monotony. But the best of all directors are those with whom the children come into contact during the working and school life. Froebel said, "Come let us live with our children." If they and we are to make the best of play, we shall play with our children.

I have in mind a school for defectives where baseball was very popular. There were several nines among the boys, but the crack nine was made up, partly of inmates and partly of employees. The foreman of a shop at the bat, one of his inmate workers in the box, another feeble-minded boy as umpire, made an ideal combination. It was more fun to "strike out" the foreman than anyone else, except perhaps the superintendent himself when he took the bat. In such institutions the gains that come from happy play are by no means confined to inmates. The *esprit de corps* that is promoted on the diamond, carries over to the schoolhouse and to the shop. It is just as necessary to promote the happiness of the employees as it is that of the inmates. I like to see the employees play among themselves, and there is no harm when they do this where the inmates can see them. Many thousands of people get a great deal of pleasure every season watching baseball games, and there is no good reason why institution inmates should not have that pleasure. Of all places in the world, happiness, which is a necessity of complete life everywhere, is a vital necessity in an institution for the defectives. Make them happy and you can do much with the imbecile and the idiot; fail in that and your failure is total.

For a great many institutions, such as those for wayward boys or girls, orphan asylums and reformatories, the ordinary games of public school life are appropriate. Something with a ball in it and a chance to run; something which needs quick eyes, and hands and a ready brain, meets the requirements. Ball games and dancing are almost never outworn. The same general classes of games are good for many of the insane and for most of the feeble-minded. For the deaf also, baseball, football, basketball, townball, etc., are quite appropriate. But when we come to the blind the problem seems more difficult.

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THE BLIND

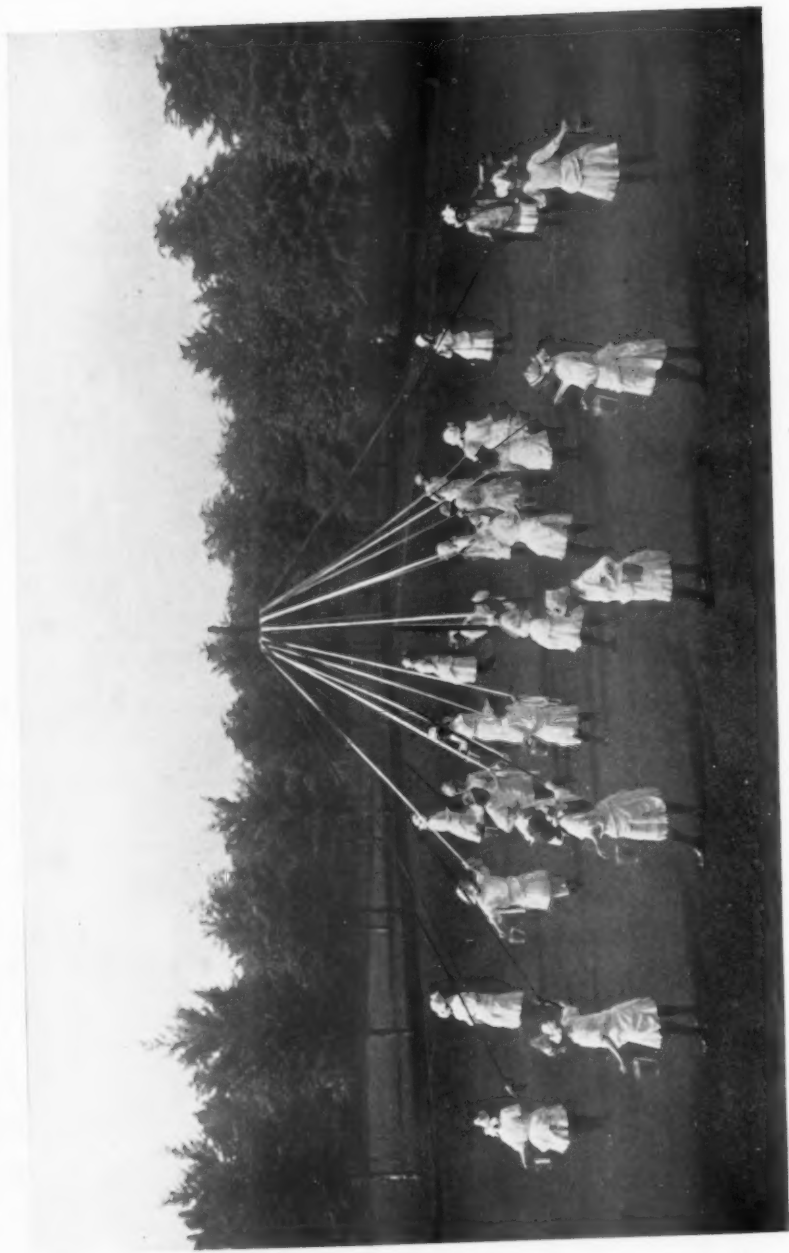
Here is what is said by a member of this committee, who is perhaps the best informed man on recreation for the blind in this country or in Europe, Mr. Charles F. F. Campbell: "The physical well-being of many blind children is neglected in their homes often through mistaken kindness on the part of the parents. Fearful that the child may come to harm, he is forbidden to help about the house or play in the garden as do his brothers and sisters, with the result that when he comes to the school for the blind he is often under-developed through lack of the ordinary activities of childhood by which seeing children are unconsciously developed. Much greater attention has to be given in the school for the blind to the physical well-being of the pupils than in a school for the seeing. Many blind children must be taught to run and play while most children learn with no other teacher than a healthy playmate. Carefully graduated gymnastic exercises are imperative and must be made the basis of the physical training to produce a well-developed, healthy, normal student. Recreation must be a definite part of his life. Two of the best forms of recreation are dancing and roller skating. Both of these help to give the sightless person confidence in moving about freely and also in cultivating poise and courage. The question is asked whether a blind person on skates does not fall down, but the immediate reply is to ask the questioner if when learning to skate he did not also fall down. The blind recognize their proximity to large objects by the sense of hearing somewhat as we do by the sense of sight. We speak of seeing a wall and a blind person might as rightfully speak of hearing it. We are familiar with its presence on account of the light which is reflected from its surface; in exactly the same way sound is reflected and a blind person uses the ear where we use the eye. Just as the effort is unconscious on our part so also it becomes for him. It must not be understood, however, that all blind people are free from clumsiness. Even those who have had the best of training do not always overcome their awkwardness; it goes without saying that those who lose their sight late in life do not as readily recognize objects and find it difficult to go about with freedom.

"Swimming is an admirable and very popular recreation for the blind. The young men learn to dive by means of a diving

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chute. When a blind person slides into the water down such a chute he learns the right angle at which to enter the water when making a good dive. There is little that a blind person cannot do in any kind of diving or swimming. Other games are 'Putting the Shot,' 'Running a 100-Yard Dash,' 'Making a Broad Jump,' 'Walking on Stilts,' 'Coasting on a Suspended Trolley Wire,' 'Flying Kites,' 'Rowing' and taking part in all kinds of games. One of the most popular sports is cycling. This is made possible by means of multicycles. These snake-like machines are composed of a series of automatic tricycles. Their construction and flexibility is very similar to an arrangement of a series of buggies fastened one behind the other, the shafts of each placed under the body of the one in front of it. It is easy to see that such a chain of vehicles can be drawn around a corner on account of the pivoted axle in each vehicle. In the multicycle, each pair of riders is on a flexible unit and as the whole series is joined together it is necessary to have only one person with sight to steer. If you could see the young men and women begging for the opportunity to 'go for a spin' on a half-holiday you would realize that the young people were anxious to take part in the sport for the sake of the fun and not because somebody had told them that cycling was necessary for the preservation of health.

"Dr. Campbell introduced cycling into his school for the blind as a practical means of securing spontaneous recreation. He is himself a living exponent of out-door exercise for persons without sight. His long cycling trips through Brittany, Norway and the British Isles are testimony to his belief in the value of the cycle for the blind. He has ascended many of the mountains in the Alps, even including Mt. Blanc, and by his ascension of this mountain he unexpectedly called the attention of many people to his faith in the possibility of making the blind independent. He showed by his own energy that the blind could overcome seemingly unsurmountable obstacles. Dr. Campbell's claim has been, even though the blind are provided with the best academic, musical or industrial training to successfully compete for a livelihood, they must be given the greatest possible confidence and independence. This cannot be gained without a healthy and vigorous body resulting from spontaneous participation in out-door sports in conjunction with physical instruction."



*Pennsylvania Institution
for the Instruction of the Blind,
Overbrook, Pa.*

MAY DAY IS BEAUTIFUL EVEN TO GIRLS WHO CANNOT SEE—IF THEY HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY

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CRIPPLED CHILDREN

Perhaps even more difficulty is found by those in charge of crippled children. Another member of the committee who is engaged in work for crippled children offers the following: "The object to be gained is the same as in the case of a normal child—recreation, exercise, and especially the discipline and training which cannot be gotten in a schoolroom, but on the playground only. Play should, to a certain degree, be carefully directed in the case of any child, but especially the cripple. For more or less of his brief lifetime he has been confined to his bed, he is irritable and has been pampered, he has been shut in and knows practically nothing of the true spirit of games, in fact, he actually acknowledges that he will not play unless he is sure of winning. As he improves in health and gains in strength, he must be educated, but instead of going to school, the school must be brought to him. Hence, this chance for mingling with normal children is denied him. With the growth and return of health come the inevitable energies of childhood which must either be crushed out, or vented on the playground in upbuilding life physically, mentally and morally.

What if he is denied this privilege? Most institutions, if not all, provide some sort of playground with someone to maintain peace and order, but no one to teach the children how to play. Normal children are trained in the home, in the kindergarten, in the school, in the gymnasium and on the field; but here is an exceedingly large family of children with no mother to superintend their play, simply attendants to say, "Don't run!" "Don't jump!" "Don't swing!" "Don't climb!" "Don't do this and don't do that," until the unanswered appeal of "what *can* we do?" drives them into the corner either to sulk or to concoct some new line of mischief and trouble. The feeling of bitterness is aroused and the spirit of revenge begins to gnaw, and, although entirely unconscious of any such promptings, they become mean and little and quarrelsome. This is, indeed, a poor preparation for a life in a cold, indifferent business world. The parents of practically all of the children in such institutions are unable to support them in idleness, and the young man and woman, in many cases physically below par, must begin the double struggle with the world and self, or resort to another institution to become a public charge for life.

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On the other hand, by well-directed games the all-around life is developed, but right here is the problem—what shall the games be? The crippled children either cannot or must not run, jump or climb. What game is there, or what recreation which gives vent to the pent-up energies of the growing, well-fed child, which does not require running, jumping or climbing? They are as natural instincts of the child as eating, and something must be devised to take their place.

Last summer, some attempt at the solution of this problem was made at the Country Branch of the New York Orthopaedic Hospital, at White Plains. A military drill was inaugurated, modified and adjusted to the needs and limitations of the children. Each day some of it was rehearsed, until by the end of the summer, all the details of the march were carried out entirely by the children, the orders proceeding primarily from the colonel, one of the boys who had risen from the ranks. A game was also constructed from the principles of basketball and center ball, which proved successful in awakening the spirit of competition throughout the institution and in developing the manly spirit in both victory and defeat.

As a result of these activities, the children were, at the end of the summer, stronger physically, in a healthier moral condition, less troublesome to the attendants, more self-respecting and self-reliant. The privileges and responsibilities of self-government developed the ability to cope with problems and gave opportunity for originality to assert itself. As Dr. Hibbs has said, "The work at the Country Hospital demonstrated to me that much can be done along the line of play for the crippled. It must, however, be given special study and their play be devised with the proper consideration of their physical disability."

ENTERTAINMENTS

So far we have confined our report to the strict letter of the title "Play," but there is another very popular and valuable form of recreative amusement suitable for institutions which many of them practice. This consists in entertainments, often dramatic in form. These give great delight to their audiences, and still greater to the actors. We have seen a comic opera in which during the last act there were one hundred and twenty child performers on the

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stage, and when the performance wound up with the "Star Spangled Banner," the chorus sung by the whole dramatic company, the effect was little short of sublime. Many children's institutions make a special feature of such entertainments during the winter, and scores of the inmates are drilled to take part on the stage. In hospitals for the insane the actors are usually confined to the employees, or come in from the outside.

CAMPING

A favorite feature of amusement during the summer is camping out. The delightful break from the institution routine is perhaps the most attractive thing about the camping, the fact that there is no bell or whistle to rise by, and no rigid hour for going to bed. To enjoy a thoroughly plastic normal, but savage, environment for a week or ten days, to return to nature in her loveliest moods, makes camping a delightful play.

Let us say again, play is life, life is good for itself, and play is good because it is life. The child who is deprived of a full share of play is deprived of so much life.

Play and work at their highest and best are equally valuable for themselves, and not for other ends, because they are equally the expression of life, but sport for the bag, work merely for wages, art to boil the pot and play for exercise or for victory are all unworthy, except in so far as the ends they subserve are desirable or necessary.

ALEXANDER JOHNSON,
Chairman.

PAGEANTS

It may be interesting to the readers of *THE PLAYGROUND* to know what communities are planning to hold pageants during the next few months. The editor of *THE PLAYGROUND* will be glad to receive, before May 10th, word of such plans in order that a statement may be prepared.

PLAY IN INSTITUTIONS*

RUDOLPH R. REEDER, PH.D.

Superintendent Orphan Asylum of the City of New York, Hastings-on-Hudson, New York



RUDOLPH R. REEDER.

There are three requisites to wholesome play,—room to play in, material to play with, and play associates and leaders. If any one of these three factors is wanting the child's play experience is incomplete.

Unfortunately the vast majority of children in institutions pass their days amid surroundings that are cramped, dull and unresponsive. Room to play in means much more than space for

physical exercise where the child may run and jump and swing and play ball. Ample room for such exercise is provided in most of our institutions, even those in urban locations and on the congregate plan; but game plays and exercise plays offer little opportunity for originality, invention or initiative. With young children they are usually extempore and accidental as to when and where indulged in. There is another form of play which appeals to the imagination and makes demands on the child's ingenuity and constructive power. I refer to building playhouses and acting out scenes and interpretations of adult life. Such play is richer in content and more educative in many ways than exercise and game plays. Where large groups of children live together playhouse planning and building require much more room than game plays. There is not only the planning, building and furnishing but also all of the household industries, such as cooking, sewing, bed making, picture hanging, care of the children—which are always more or

* Address given at the Fourth Playground Congress of The Playground Association of America, June 8, 1910.

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less unruly,—the receiving of calls from neighbors, care of the sick, visits of the doctor, and so on.

Time as well as room is a large factor in such a series of play interests. The two or three or larger group of children engaged in such play enterprise will return to it again and again reenacting the old or taking up a new phase of it each time. Yesterday the laundry, to-day a sick child in the family, to-morrow mud pies and doughnuts, and the next day afternoon calls, make demands upon the imagination and inventive resources of these little men and women. The play house to-day is but a stage in a metamorphosis, for to-morrow there may be tearing down here and putting up there, enriching the original conception with change after change, while all of the time the child is enjoying the fairyland of his own creation. Such rich, life-giving, mind-expanding play development is impossible to children massed in great numbers and within narrow bounds. Where there are several hundred with equal rights on the common playground, the group for such a continued and co-operative play interest could never get together nor maintain their integrity as a group, even if once selected by a natural sympathy of interests. Again, older children on the same common grounds might not be in favor of such a performance and would be liable to bully and break up the whole undertaking if once begun. The same restrictions that prevent the children in one stage of development from indulging in a rich and interested way their play instinct, will operate in a similar manner against those in other stages of development, and thus the plays of children so situated are brought to an impoverished dead-levelism, empty of all richness of content and void of inspiration—a mere bodily exercise that profiteth little.

The first response of the children of the New York Orphanage to the changed environment which the cottage plan and rural location brought about, was manifested in the new-found freedom of play. Play houses began to spring up here and there on the spacious grounds with the suddenness of Jonah's gourd. Building material of all kinds, and furniture, including everything from old pieces of carpet to leaky tea-kettles, were in great demand. Children who were old enough to have passed this stage of play interest, let go their pent-up enthusiasm in these plays of younger children. They attempted to live over again those years during which a



*Pennsylvania Institution
for the Instruction of the Blind,
Overbrook, Pa.*

THE STORY HOUR

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cramped environment had inhibited constructive and dramatic plays. It was as though the wings of their imagination were suddenly given the power of flight and they essayed at once to soar.

Two score or more of these play houses may be found widely scattered over the grounds of our Orphanage. Some are in groups while others are tucked away in quiet nooks or retreats. But there is no common ownership. Each one represents the combined purpose and labor of two or more proprietors. Property interests and rights are sharply drawn and respected. The very thought of having a house all their own which no one will molest, is an inspiration to children.

There is another play interest instinctive in the child which requires plenty of room,—more than is usually found in urban locations—namely the care and breeding of pets. Many of the boys of the New York Orphanage build their own dove cotes, rabbitries and poultry houses and raise their own pets. They buy, sell, select and exchange stock. Their instruction in sex knowledge begins in a natural way through their experience in raising and caring for their pets. At this writing there are over fifty of these ventures on the Orphanage grounds with any number of great expectations of prolific increases in the near future.

MATERIAL TO PLAY WITH

The second requisite to wholesome play is material to play with. There is but little that children can do with asphalt pavements, brick walls, iron railings or stone steps. These confront them at every turn in the city home. The child delights in material that he can change and shape at will. He will amuse himself by the hour upon a sand pile or a few square feet of earth in which he can dig and arrange fantastic structures of cave houses, bridges and tunnels, or with a lump of putty, a handful of dough, mud or mud pies,—anything that he can shape to the suggestion of his fancy. He is himself in the plastic and formative period of growth and needs for his development a plastic environment. He will learn much through his fingers and toes if they are allowed to come in contact with earth, air, sunshine, water and animate nature. Brick, stone and asphalt undergo but slight changes with the march of the seasons. Winter and summer with them differ in temperature only. Such solid, non-plastic forms were never intended to surround the home of childhood. Year after year during the early

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period of child life spent within the narrow confines of an institution so unchangeably and inflexibly environed, can but stupefy the senses and arrest spiritual development. The best place for a child to perform the natural function of change and growth is in an environment that changes and grows. Nature alone can furnish this.

Material to play with means much more than play things and play apparatus. These are paraphernalia, more or less, finished, rigid and non-shapeable. A suitable environment will supply the raw material of play apparatus. Given loam, clay, stone, wood, water, animals, plants, colors, sounds, odors, growth, change, and the child will create much of his own play experience and produce many of his own playthings. For the natural child whose taste has not become depraved by luxury, there is ten times as much play experience to be extracted from self-made playthings as from store toys. The rag doll which always needs something done to it, which the little girl can dress to her own taste, which she can love, caress or spank and put to bed, according to her own mood for the time, is a more interesting plaything than the gorgeously dressed shop doll in laces and frills, which has eyes that open and shut.

The largest factor in all play is the self-activity of the player. It is no less true that we play by doing than it is that we learn by doing, hence a child gets out of a plaything in proportion to what he puts into it. If it is a finished product wanting nothing, not much play experience can be extracted from it. Raw material, varied, plastic and shapeable, is the greatest need in the play environment of the child. The boys and girls in the New York Orphanage have eighty individual vegetable gardens and about forty flower gardens. But besides these, which are more or less conspicuous, there are scores of little gardens containing but a few square feet surrounded by rows of stones or laid out with a string and little sticks, tucked away in cosy corners about the place. I have just counted a dozen of these, which few besides the little owners ever see. In these plots little ones too young for any sort of orderly gardening, plan, dig, plant and pull at their own sweet will. This is play.

With our modern rapid transit facilities and differences between rural and urban realty values, and with Nature's lavish hands outstretched to the little ones, it is an awful mistake, not to

PLAY IN INSTITUTIONS

say cruelty, to locate in cities or to continue within urban limits, institutions for children. Lack of vision and the conservatism of many pious old trustees is the barrier that shuts little children within the gloomy enclosures of city institutions.

But not all of those moving into rural locations are thoughtful enough to provide for all that may well be secured. It is an unpardonable oversight in selecting a rural location to overlook certain features which contribute most to the recreation, development and pleasure of the child. Thus, a rural location without a hill or brook, without fruit and forest trees, is a sad oversight. A location without a swimming beach is the blunder of dried up old men and women who have forgotten their childhood. Estimate, if you can, what it means or if you please, what it is worth to the two hundred boys and girls of this old New York Orphanage to plunge into the river three times a week from June until September, to wade and paddle, to swim and dive, to do a hundred stunts with feet, hands, legs and bodies. The pleasure and value of all this is simply inestimable. To overlook such a feature in choosing a site is to forget that one was ever a child. Not quite as much, but a great deal, may be said along the same line in behalf of the coasting hill and the skating pond. To overlook either is to forget that it is as natural for a little child to play as it is for a bird to sing or a fish to swim. Two hundred children on sleds and skates, skimming the icy course or cutting circles and curves, is a picture to delight the heart and renew the youth of every lover of childhood.

PLAY ASSOCIATES

The third requisite for wholesome play is suitable associates and leaders. As personality in the teacher outranks every other influence in the education of the child, so does companionship in play count for more than room to play in or material to play with, important as these factors are. Where my child plays or what playthings he may have are small factors in comparison with his play associates. Play short circuits the process of education. The shaping of character takes place unconsciously and more rapidly through play experience than through any other activity of the child. Since imitation outruns instruction, models count for more than precepts; but it is important that these models should not pose as such. In the play renaissance, of which this Congress is a notable expression, there may be danger of over-supervision of the

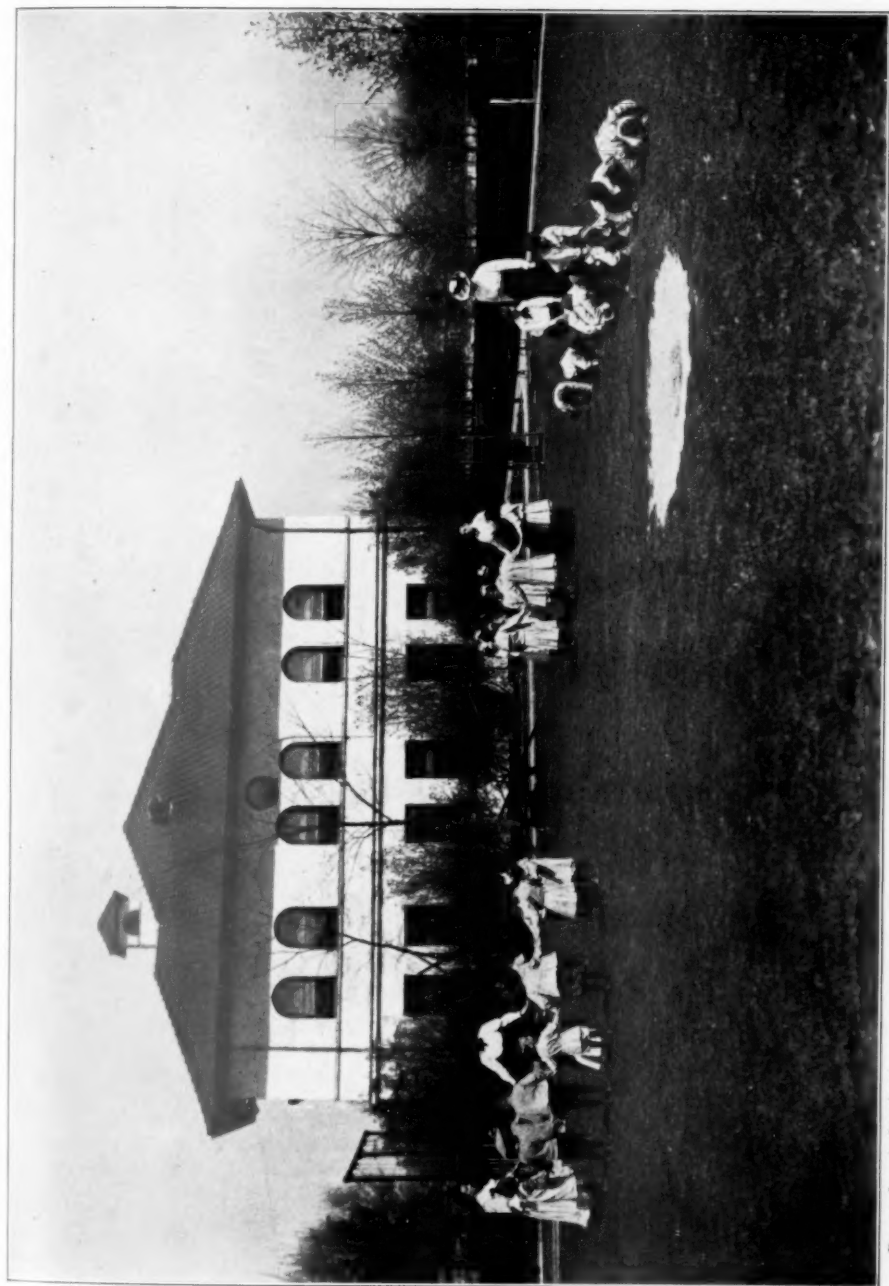
PLAY IN INSTITUTIONS

child's play life; danger that play may lose its spontaneity. Play leaders are sometimes too anxious to teach how to play while themselves forget to play. Their work is formal rather than inspirational. Jean Paul says, "I am afraid of every hairy hand and fist that paws in among this tender pollen of child flowers, shaking off here one color, there another, so as to produce just the right carnation."

The first thing for the play leader to do is to get into the game with all his heart and soul. Let instruction be incidental and subordinate to the spirit of the play and the enthusiasm of the game.

If I had a hundred boys to teach to swim I should rather put a half-dozen good swimmers among them than to employ as many teachers of swimming. Fifty-eight of the boys and girls of our Orphanage learned to swim by imitation two years ago this summer when our swimming crib was opened.

I do not mean that adult associates are not necessary or in fact invaluable to the play experience of the child, but only this—that it is easy to overdo formal instruction in play and that many things may better be learned by imitation of other children than by formal instruction. The greatest need in institution play life is adult association and companionship. Those who are responsible for the children during their recreation hours are usually called "caretakers." Both the name and the official character of the position should be changed to that of "play leader" or "recreation supervisor." No officer of the staff can contribute more to the happiness of the children and none can make their lives more dreary than the one who holds this position. As a "caretaker" he is frequently a stern and sometimes sour monitor of order and easily annoyed by the "noisy brats," but as a play leader he will become their genial companion, deeply interested in their physical, social and moral welfare. To suppose that about all children need to make them happy are playthings and other children to play with is a great mistake. They weary of one another much sooner than of older people who are young in heart. In fact, if the older associates are interesting and companionable their company is often preferred to that of other children. Transform every "caretaker" into a play leader and a flood of sunshine will pour into the otherwise dreary abodes of institution life.



*Pennsylvania Institution
for the Instruction of the Blind,
Overbrook, Pa.*

Ring Games

Leap Frog

TEACHERS AND PUPILS AT PLAY ON THE KINDERGARTEN GREEN

DISCUSSION OF REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON PLAY IN INSTITUTIONS*

Theodore F. Chapin, of the Lyman School for Boys, Massachusetts, emphasized the value of homemade and miscellaneous play material, rather than manufactured toys, in order that the inventive spirit of the child might be fostered.

Charles H. Johnson, of the Albany Orphan Asylum, New York, emphasized the obligation resting on those who heard the addresses of the day to educate their boards of trustees to take the broad view of the complete life which includes play, and plenty of room for it, with a free and natural environment; to educate their associates in the work, who sometimes feel that it is beneath their dignity to play with children or who are dreadfully shocked at the disorder that results from such play houses as Dr. Reeder describes; to educate the children to play and incite their spontaneous activity.

J. J. Kelso, of Toronto, told of a small orphanage with one hundred and thirty-five children which was commended by a neighbor because the inmates made less noise than his own three boys. On being induced to think on the subject he concluded that such quietness was unnatural and therefore wrong for the children.

Dr. Reeder commended the new game of playground ball, for both boys and girls.

In reply to a statement that boards of trustees sometimes think that playgrounds are wasted space and play a waste of time, Dr. Reeder answered that the social waste which comes from neglecting to develop all the powers of the child, which can only be done when all his faculties are given free play, is far more serious than any waste of money.

* Fourth Annual Congress of the Playground Association of America, Rochester, N. Y., June 8, 1910.

RECREATION IN A SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

O. H. BURRITT

Principal The Pennsylvania Institution for the Instruction of the Blind,
Overbrook, Pennsylvania

About a modern American school for the blind one sees little in equipment of gymnasium or playground to remind him that the children who use the apparatus are deprived of sight,—in the gymnasium, horse, wall machines, parallel, horizontal and stall bars, trapeze, teeter ladder, giant stride, climbing ropes, horizontal ladder, running track; on the playground, swings, see-saws, horizontal bar, slide and merry-go-round. The "trolley" and the "rocking boat," with which our playgrounds are provided, are not usually included in playground equipment but, if provided, they would prove no less popular with seeing children than with our boys and girls. Indeed, the arrangement we have to enable two totally blind boys to run a foot race is the only piece of apparatus that is provided specifically for the blind.

"The idea of this was borrowed from pictures contained in the reports of the institution in Sydney, New South Wales, and in Edinburgh, Scotland. A three-strand twisted wire cable, as light as is consistent with strength, is stretched breast high between well guyed end posts one hundred and ten yards apart. The little sagging towards the middle is of no consequence. The runner holds in one hand a wooden handle attached by a short flexible chain to a ring on the wire. As he runs the ring slips along, and both the feel and the sound it gives enable him to hold his course. So far so good; but how to afford a proper stop at the one hundred yards mark was not ascertained until we had stretched across the track at this place a fringe made of hammock twine to strike the runner in the face, much as the low-bridge indicator does the men standing on top of moving freight trains. This fringe stop, which is entirely satisfactory, covers the two parallel cables of our running track. Starting as they always do from the same end, blind boys can practice running as much as they please; but in all real racing, one instructor starts a pair by pistol shot while another instructor, standing at the one hundred yards mark, times them with a stopwatch." *

* Reprinted from the Seventy-fourth Annual Report of the Managers of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Instruction of the Blind.



THE SLIDE



*Pennsylvania Institution
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Overbrook, Pa.*

THE SAND BOX

RECREATION FOR THE BLIND

The degree of blindness and the age at which sight was lost have a very direct bearing upon the play of the blind child. The child with but 2/100 of normal vision in one eye, while incapable of being educated without the special appliances devised for the blind, yet possesses sufficient vision to see how most games are played by seeing children. These children become the teachers of a few of the more energetic and ambitious ones who see not at all; for in every group of blind children there are always a few more inventive, more ingenious, more venturesome spirits; but blind children generally must be provided with playground apparatus, and a sympathetic teacher-companion before they will play. To teach the boy or girl who has seen for several years, and has played many of the games well known to seeing children, how to play these games in a form adapted to the blind, and games with which he is entirely unfamiliar, is a very different thing from teaching the child who has never seen, or one who has not seen since early childhood, how to play the simplest games that are known to seeing children.

Our grounds have been laid out not only to comport with the style of architecture of our buildings but to conform to the needs of our children. The casual visitor does not observe that we have seven playgrounds all surrounded by beautiful trees set in regular rows. There is not the slightest danger that our children will collide with these, for bounding the playgrounds are walks which, the moment a blind child sets foot upon them, are a warning that danger is imminent. It is thus possible and quite usual for our children to run with abandon within these playgrounds, entirely free from obstruction.

PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

For all our pupils our first problem is the improvement of their physical condition; and this is pre-eminently so for the children we receive at the kindergarten. In order to encourage in them a desire to be outdoors as much as possible, we have given considerable attention to the equipment of the playground. In mild weather the sand box, with buckets, shovels, and moulds, is surrounded by a group of happy children; others are using the slide; another group the merry-go-round; the swings hanging from the frame erected for the purpose attract others; the quadruple see-saw is often filled with merry girls and boys; but the girls appear fondest



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ROCKING-BOAT

RECREATION FOR THE BLIND

of the "rocking boat," and the "trolley" never ceases to be popular with the boys.

All this apparatus encourages free play; and most children, even many blind children, if left to themselves, will learn to play if they have something to play with. Some of our children however are naturally very timid, while others have been made so by the restraint of fond but unwise parents, and only under the sympathetic encouragement of the teacher can they overcome their timidity. To provide for this, and because the teacher can know the child best at play, for "the child is wholly natural only in play," we have provided for our kindergarten children a half-hour period of supervised play outdoors four days in the week. Three teachers have charge of as many groups of children. The youngest group is instructed in the use of the apparatus. All are taught games, with the teacher as leader and playfellow. The older girls usually choose doll games, housekeeping, or ring games; the boys prefer play with the football, chasing, racing, and other games equally vigorous.

DANCING

Dancing is a popular form of recreation with our girls and to a less degree with our boys. The gymnasium is the center of the social life of the school. Here all our dances occur. The cement border of the gymnasium floor, seven feet wide—exactly that of the running track directly over it—affords a convenient place for all floor apparatus while it equally well serves its purpose to prevent the dancers from colliding with the wall. In this gymnasium with floor of wood, fifty-four feet square, I have seen sixty dancers among whom was a large number, totally blind, gliding about as easily and as gracefully as though they were all possessed of sight. Moving as they do all in the same direction, collisions are no more frequent than among a like number of seeing persons. Dance programs are provided in the Braille—the embossed type which the dancers all read.

SWIMMING

A desirable, if not an essential, part of a school for the blind, well-equipped for the all-round physical development of its pupils, is a swimming pool. Our pool, tile lined, fifty-eight by twenty-five feet, with a depth varying from three feet to six feet six inches, holds approximately fifty six thousand gallons of water. All our boys use it at least once a week throughout the school year, and



Perkins Institution for the Blind.

A TEMPORARY COASTER AT SOUTH BOSTON



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Overbrook, Pa.*

WHO WAS BORN BLIND, THE BOY JOYOUSLY WORKING AND PLAY-
ING IN HIS GARDEN—OR THE MAN WHO SEES BUT NEVER
PLAYS?



100-YARD DASH (START)
Overbrook Record, 10 4-5 seconds



100-YARD DASH (FINISH)

The racers are able to give unhampered attention to speed by means of the device shown above. Upon the wire cables, stretched the full length of the track, are rings to which are attached short chains and handles. The racers hold these handles and run the course with perfect freedom. They are warned of the end of the track by the fringe of cords similar to that which is used on railroads to notify the brakemen on top of the freight cars of "low bridges."

RECREATION FOR THE BLIND

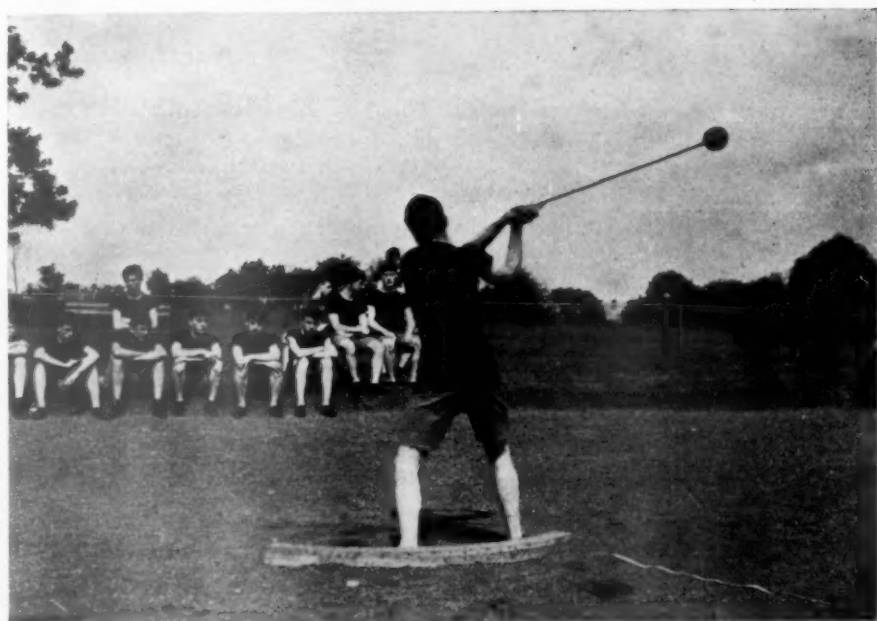
during the warmer weather, two or three times a week. It has not proven so popular with our girls, though some of them are just as eager to use it. The majority of our boys quickly learn all styles of swimming, on the surface of the water or under it, on back, on side, paddling and treading water, and they are as fond of diving as boys with sight unimpaired.

FOOTBALL

Our boys get much sport out of an adaptation of football. For two years now we have had a junior and a senior league composed of four teams of five or six boys each. In the organization of the teams the instructor must determine the membership of each team: for, if left to the choice of a captain, the boy with a little sight will inevitably be chosen first. Each team has at least one boy with a little useful sight; the others are usually totally blind, or at least possessed of insufficient sight to aid them in locating the ball. When it has been determined in the usual way which side shall "kick off" from the center of the field, for two fifteen or twenty-minute halves, the efforts of each team are directed toward kicking the ball over the goal of the opposing team. To prevent the ball from passing over its goal the team depends chiefly upon the boy who has a little useful vision, whom they have designated, "the stopper," although the captain has directed his sightless team mates to stand at possible strategic points with the hope that the opposing player, who, four chances out of five, is unable to see where any member of the rival team is standing, will chance to kick the ball against one of them who thus contributes his share toward the stopping of the ball. But the totally blind player contributes his major share to the team work in the kicking which he is very likely to be able to do as well, sometimes better, than his seeing team mate. The number of times each team kicks the ball over the goal of the other, within the time limits, determines the final score. I have seen the sidewalks, which constitute the side lines, well filled with partisans of each team vociferously urging their favorite team on to victory.

BOWLING

No special device is necessary to make the bowling alley serviceable for the blind. Indeed several of our totally blind boys—and teachers, too—are among our most enthusiastic and successful bowlers. One of them has a record of 203 of a possible 300; one, 168; another, 166; while several others, who have not yet equalled



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THROWING THE HAMMER



*Pennsylvania Institution
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Overbrook, Pa.*

PUTTING THE SHOT

RECREATION FOR THE BLIND

these scores, are fond of the sport and from it secure beneficial exercise. A hand rail above the ball "rack," about thirty inches from the floor and extending to the "foul" line, is a slight aid to some of the bowlers in getting their direction. This is, however, not essential, and the records given above were made without it. Totally blind boys can bowl well, and thoroughly enjoy it.

PARTIES

Occasional cottage parties break the humdrum of institution life. Our family of senior boys, thirty in number, celebrated St. Valentine's day this year by having a progressive euchre party in their cottage to which they had invited their teachers. Another time it may be five hundred and those who do not play cards which are so marked as to be readily discerned by the fingers may choose checkers, dominoes, authors or even pit—all of which have been made available for the blind.

A masquerade party in the gymnasium has been a feature of our recent Hallowe'en celebrations, and that the masqueraders could see neither the humorous nor the grotesque in costume detracted not a whit from their enjoyment of the evening.

Funds for an athletic event were needed last spring by the athletic association. These were easily realized from a very successful minstrel performance; nor was it easy to determine who enjoyed it most—the sightless lads who participated or their fellow pupils who sat in the audience.

Our girls have derived considerable pleasure recently from the celebration of May Day, with the May pole dances, the crowning of the Queen of May, and figure marching. Folk dances, too, have contributed to the pleasure and the interest with which they have done their work in gymnasium and on playground, under the direction of their physical training teacher. These May Day exercises and folk dances would probably not be possible if all the participants were totally blind. Probably one-fourth of our girls who have part in these festivities have a slight amount of vision.

GARDENING

An account of recreation in our school would be incomplete without mention of our school gardens. These have been maintained by our kindergarten children for several years, but two years ago the children promoted from the kindergarten to the main school made request that they might continue to have gardens. The re-

PLAYGROUND REVIVALS

quest was gladly granted, and last year a wave of enthusiasm in gardening swept over the entire school. Each grade had its own garden spot and, with the exception of the older pupils, each pupil his individual garden. Those seeds were selected for planting which would mature before school closed in June. The onions, lettuce, radishes and tomatoes which the children harvested from their own gardens, the results of their own care and labor, tasted much sweeter than those which were purchased by the steward and served to the children without a thought on their part.

Had I not already exceeded the limits of this article, I might append a list of games which our children play. They would serve to emphasize the fact that blind children are after all quite like other children,—far more so than is generally supposed. If you do not believe it, come to Overbrook and see.

PLAYGROUND REVIVALS

EDUCATION TO PLAYGROUND VALUES

HENRY S. CURTIS, PH.D.

Worcester, Massachusetts

In a democratic form of government no movement can be advanced much more rapidly than the public is educated to demand it, for where legislation or systems are secured in advance of the popular appreciation the legislation is sure not to be enforced and the system to be ineffective. A school system that is administered on ideals that are much higher than those of its community is sure to cost the superintendent his job. The methods now being employed in a great many of our modern charitable institutions would not have been permitted ten years ago. Our laws for the protection of game and fish and birds are not enforced because rural communities do not appreciate their value. Temperance laws are always ineffective in communities where local sentiment is not in favor of them.

But the need of educating the community to the ideals and values of organized play is in some ways peculiar. It does not require much argument to convince the ordinary person that the sick man needs a hospital, or that the hungry man needs food, or that the little child should not be worked for eight or ten hours a day in a factory. With play it is different. Very many parents of average intelligence do not regard play as valuable in itself. In

PLAYGROUND REVIVALS

their reasoning about it they constantly confuse it with idleness, which is really its antithesis. It seems a trivial diversion in which the child may engage if there is nothing else for him to do. Even the community that is beginning to become conscious of playground needs usually looks upon the playground as a "place to play" and thinks that the problem has resulted from the increasing congestion and the disappearance of open places in our cities. The idea that organization or supervision of the play of children is necessary or desirable is utterly foreign to the traditions and "common-sense" of the average citizen. Nevertheless, the playground which secures the attendance of the children but does not direct their activities or restrain the vicious tendencies of unsocial members is sure to be a menace of the very gravest kind to all of the larger hopes and ideals of childhood. Under these circumstances, it becomes absolutely necessary to the success of the movement in most cities that its people shall be progressively educated to an appreciation of playground values and requirements.

This necessity arises out of several conditions which are easily perceived. The first reason why such education is necessary is because without it the public will not contribute to the support of the playgrounds. For no intelligent person will give his hard earned shekels to an enterprise in which he has not been interested and the value of which seems to him questionable. The second reason is that it will soon be necessary to secure appropriations from the city and necessary, too, to see that these funds are properly expended when appropriated, so that the result will be the welfare rather than the injury of the children.

The point in regard to which education is most needed, of course, is supervision. It is not hard to convince any group of people that the children need some other playground than the street; nor is it difficult for them to see that there is an advantage in having something with which to play on the grounds provided for them; but the idea of supervision is sure to be a stumbling block. Even if they concede that it is necessary that there should be some one on the playground to see that the equipment is not destroyed and that the children do not quarrel, they are apt to think that a care-taker or janitor is quite sufficient, and that a physical director or kindergarten at a good salary is a luxury that may well be dispensed with.

The reason this point of view is so often taken is that people do not understand what the playground movement stands for, the

PLAYGROUND REVIVALS

value of play in the life of the child, or the possibility of child development through its organized activities. What such a community needs is a vision of play as the social atmosphere and spirit of childhood which moulds the child's thoughts and actions, determines his habits and character, and is, in fact, during the earlier years, the central fact about him, holding a place to which the education of the schoolroom can only be incidental. If a community can be brought to this point of view, they will not place substitute policemen or unsuccessful politicians in charge of playground systems. They will insist upon a certain degree of competence, at least in people to whose care they intrust their children.

One means that is almost absolutely essential, in so educating our citizens, is the successful operation of one or more playgrounds. Just as an unsupervised playground in any community is likely to do great harm to the movement, so a single playground that is successfully conducted is a most effective means of spreading the movement throughout the city. There have been few cases where cities have taken up playgrounds as a public movement until one or more playgrounds have been operated under private initiative for a period long enough to prove their value. It is a question if a considerable appropriation for playgrounds made by the common council of any city which has not yet been educated to the best playground ideals and activities would do more good than harm; and it is quite possible that the movement would be started in such a way that it would have to be completely reorganized a little later in order to get satisfactory results.

In order to make the playground really effective in the education of the community, it is best to have it located in a part of the city that is accessible to the citizens as well as to the children, so that they may see its operations from day to day. It should be made a recreation center. There should be band concerts, athletic tournaments, and play festivals. Influential men will be glad to act as judges and will thus be won to the support of the movement.

But undoubtedly the most effective means in arousing a city is a playground revival of a week or more, during which addresses will be given at the schools, in the churches, before prominent clubs and organizations, and an account of the addresses will be run prominently in the daily papers. The revival meeting is built on good psychology. The arousing of enthusiasm is a slow process and is not achieved by a single attempt, but requires a succession

PLAYGROUND REVIVALS

of attempts until the ideals become plain and the feelings are aroused to demand appropriate action. A group of people can be made enthusiastic over any ideal if they can be made to live with it for a week or so; while if this ideal is presented to them on successive occasions a week apart, the enthusiasm of the first will have died away very likely before the second; and so the enthusiasm does not accumulate.

The problem is not merely the education of a community at large, but it is necessary also that the Board of Education shall be made to see the desirability of maintaining playgrounds and recreation centers in connection with the schools, and that there shall be some educational organization of the school athletics. The Park Board must be brought to appreciate the possibilities of the parks in furnishing healthful recreation to the children and especially athletic facilities for the young men and women. And the Common Council must have brought to its attention what other cities are doing to provide public recreation and to understand the significance of the playground as a public institution. Without this education of public officials, the play movement will not be safe in their hands. This education is best secured by having certain members of the Board of Education, of the Park Board, and of the Common Council on the board of directors of the playground association, where they will serve three important purposes. They can inform the playground association as to existing conditions in the city treasury and plans for the future. They will be the best possible representatives of the movement to support requests for appropriations before the respective bodies of which they are members, and, most important, through this activity they will themselves be educated to understand the ideals of the movement so that the playgrounds may later be safely turned over to them.

This educational purpose seems to me much the most important function of a playground association. No small body of people can hope to secure all of the playgrounds that are needed for any good-sized city, or to maintain such a system from private funds; but they should use every means in their power to interest and educate the public so that the playgrounds may be taken over by the city and administered as a city department according to modern ideals. But this can only be done after the city, through its people and its various departments, has come to realize the significance of the play movement and its requirements.

“Experience”

A little book for playground people published by A. G. Spalding & Bros., inc., Chicopee, Mass., will be sent post paid on request.

Write To-day

NEEDED—\$5,000

Anyone who has seen a group of children in an orphan asylum transformed through play, or knows how much joy may be brought to the insane or feeble minded through further development of recreational opportunities, or understands how life may be quickened in homes for the aged, can realize what it would mean to have an expert from the Playground Association of America giving his entire time to this problem.

ALEXANDER JOHNSON
Secretary National Conference
of Charities and Corrections

